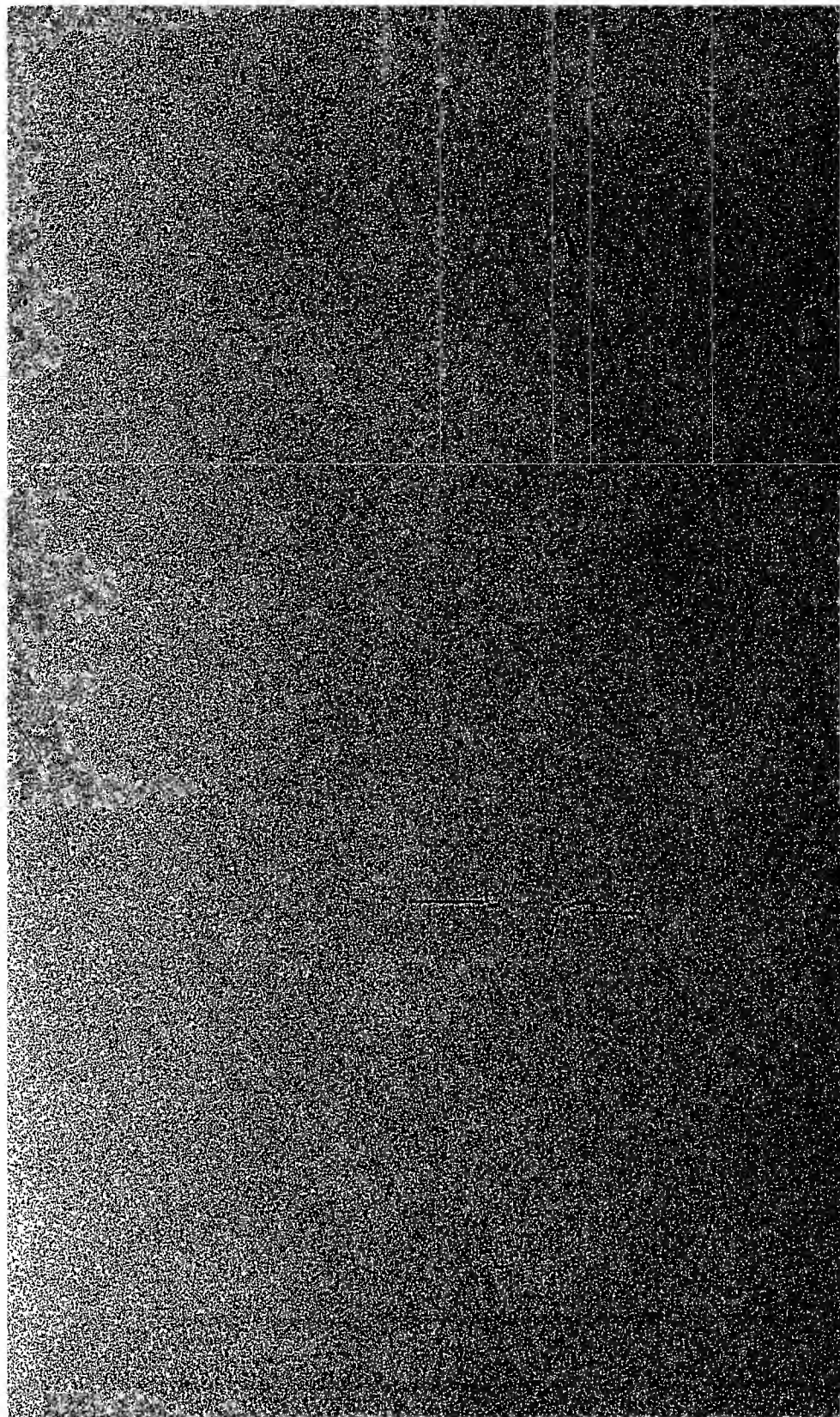


Landstrom, Oscar
Pioneer homestead
stories

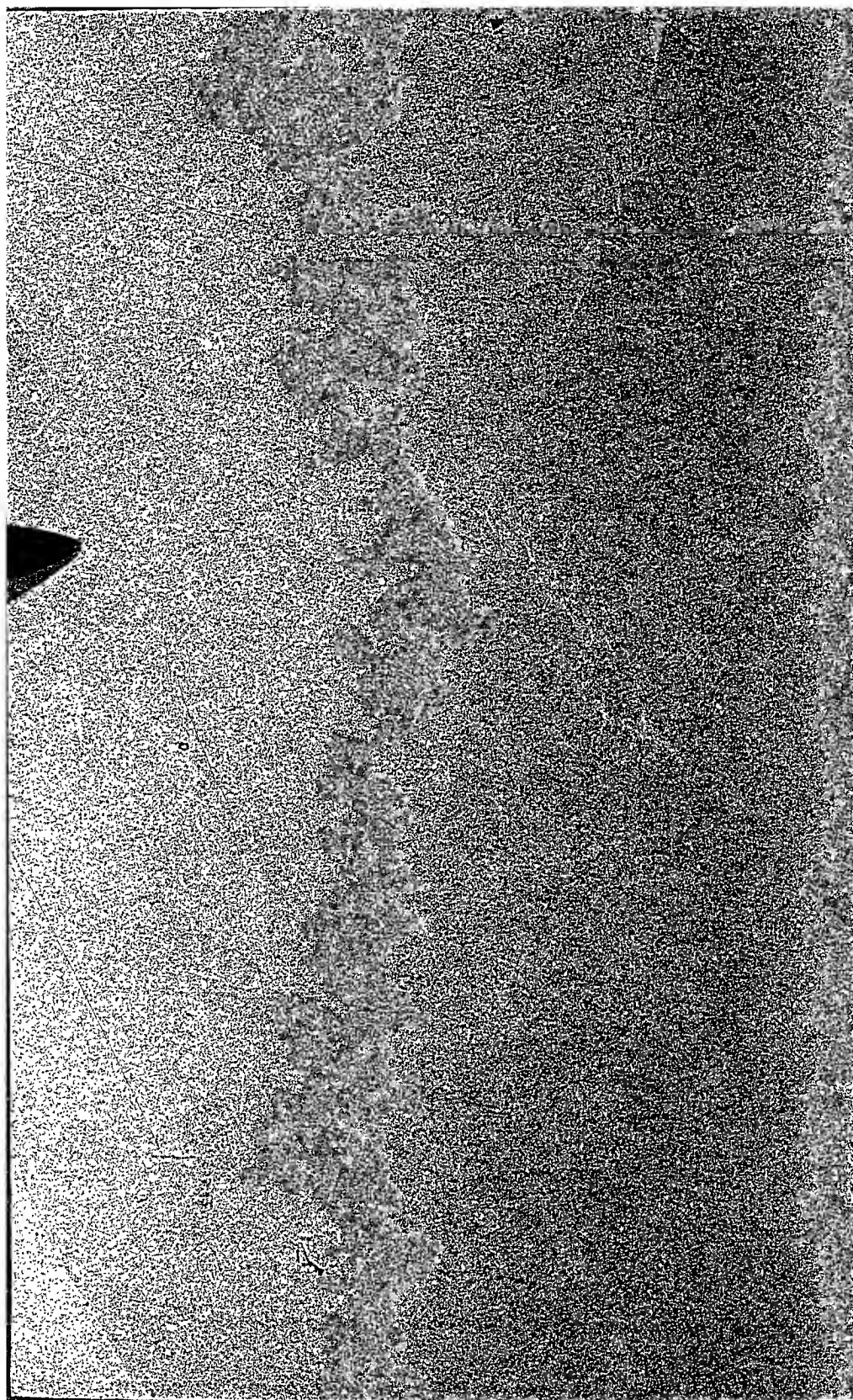
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Pioneer Homestead Stories

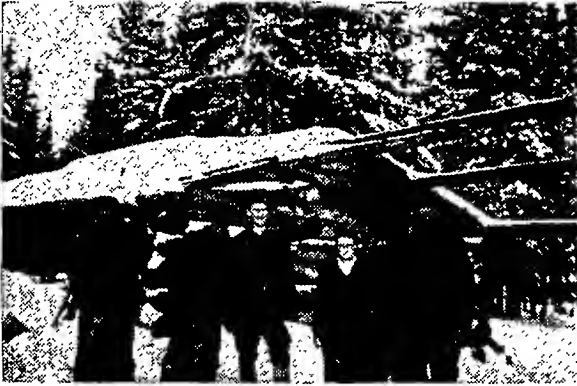


by Oscar Landstrom



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The first Peace River homestead shack
Twelve miles north of Fort St. John, B.C.

Pioneer Homestead Stories

From 1868 to Present Time

Written by Oscar Landstrom

Govan, Saskatchewan

MAY, 1942



Our present home, Govan, Sask.
Inset—Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Landstrom.

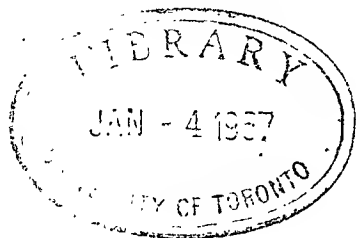
CONTENTS

This book contains first, My Parent's Homestead Experiences in northern Minnesota, as told by them, and partly my own observations and experiences as a youth.

The second is my own personal experience of tests and trials when I homesteaded near Blackduck, Minnesota.

The third tells about our homestead at Govan, Saskatchewan.

The fourth story is about the Peace River B. C. block.



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My Parents Homestead Story

Mr. and Mrs. John Landstrom, my parents, came from Sweden as immigrants to the United States in the year 1868. The Civil War had just ended three years before, consequently there were hard times with low prices on the produce and very low wages. Yet there was immigration to the United States from most of the countries in Europe, seeking new homes for themselves as well as their posterity.

At this time the railroad was completed about 30 miles west of Minneapolis. Then they had to walk the rest of the road which is 25 miles through a path in the woods on the way to Cokato Minnesota, they carried some of their belongings and two of my sisters on their backs. Their material wealth was not very much at the time. Finally they reached their destination, and later took up homesteads seven miles north of Cokato, where they remained until their death.

I was born September 6th, 1871, and that fall a great bush-fire swept the country. My mother was forced to take the children and the household possessions to the center of a small cultivated field for protection. The fire swept over the house, but only the corners suffered a little, due to the fact that the roof was covered with dirt. However the fences and the feed which had been stacked were completely destroyed. Imagine the difference, in coming from a cultured country like Sweden to this strange land with strange language and the reaction of the conditions in these thick woods uncleared. This made it very hard for the newcomers. Here was the situation such that one had to help himself or starve to death. (How the early settlers in those days could manage is more than we nowadays can figure out.) Their hope for better days in the future helped them to keep up courage.

The first winter on the homestead they ground their flour on the coffee-mill. The meat supply was a pig-head my father paid 8 cents a pound for, and then some bush-rabbit which he was able to snare. There were also deers but he did not have any gun so he could not get them.

The second year they were able to buy a cow which was a great help to the family. From that cow we got our first pair of oxen. For transportation a homemade sled was made for use both in summer and winter until the time came when they were able to buy a wagon.

On Sunday mornings my mother would make breakfast for the family, milk a couple of cows and then walk seven or eight miles to church service and back home again. The railroad on

the Great Northern was continued westward. Small towns were built up through the West. My father worked on the railroad the first two summers and my mother had to stay in the Log-cabin with the children. The first bushels of potatoes were carried by my father on his back 12 miles, and were planted in the Spring, but the neighbor's pig was running loose and came there one Sunday when we were away and destroyed them all. The next year he carried a bushel of potatoes for six miles which were planted,—then the potato bugs nearly destroyed them that year.

In the Summer my mother picked pails of raspberries with the help of my two older sisters and walked seven miles to Cokato to sell them, and this kept on every other day till the berry season was over. In return she bought groceries and clothing for the children and herself. She did the same thing in the Fall when the cranberries were ripe.

Flour mills had then been built in Kingston and Forest City. But the difficulty to get there was the Crow-River which was both big and swift at that time. Then a walking bridge was made in the winter-time, with poles driven into the bottom of the river. When teams were going to cross they had to wade or swim. My mother had to carry the flour that had been milled, on her back a distance of eight or nine miles as the way was only a path through the woods.

One time crossing the walking-bridge she slipped and fell into the river with her precious bag of flour. She was able to catch one of the braces on the bridge and climb up again but the flour-sack floated down the river. By the help of a good neighbor by the name of Sunden, who had a boat, the bag was saved. To her surprise when she came home the water had only gone in an inch, so she still had some to feed her hungry children.

A few years later my oldest sister, 16 years old, worked in Minneapolis for a dollar a week. My mother walked the whole distance of 57 miles on the railroad-track to Minneapolis to see her, and to buy the first manufactured furniture for the home.

As I have mentioned before, my father was working on the railroad, and at harvest time he went out helping to harvest around Hastings, Minn. To build railroads in those days was not so easy as today, as they had to use wheelbarrows and planks to move the dirt and shovel by hand. The wages were \$1.10 a day out of which came board, and they had to work like slaves. If one quit, there were hundreds more looking for work ready to take their place. Twice he was cheated out of two months wages as the contractor collected the money and then skipped

away. Then the men waited at the camp for the pay until the food supply was gone without results.

The first five years, all the crop they had was some potatoes and corn. Some years the frost damaged the crop before it was matured. One or two acres of wheat was sown, and cut with a scythe and was threshed with flail in the fall. A few years later a cradle was invented and acreage increased more and more. My father hired a man to cradle, father and mother doing the tying with straw bands. Now I was old enough to be along, I had a wooden rake and bunched it and they came behind to bind it. Threshing then was done by horse power, five teams of horses were hitched to a merry-go-round. A man in the center with a long whip driving them.

My father was the first one to buy a champion reaper. Oxen were used for power. People came from long distances to see this wonderful machine. Four of the rakes laid the grain down on the platform and the fifth raked it off. When horses were used on the reaper, it took five men to do the tying. The tying was done with a string. The tyers were placed at four equal distances at the field, going around the field as the reaper went.

On the next harvesting machine, was an elevator which elevated the grain upon the table, two men stood riding on the machine tying the bundles. At that time the portable steam-engine was used for threshing. They surely had a hard time to line them up with the separator. The separator was equipped with the straw-carriers which elevated it up about 12 feet. In bigger settings it took from four to five men to take the straw away. The grain was measured in half bushels and emptied into sacks.

The next makes of binders were selfbinders, but used stove-wire for this purpose instead of twine. This machine was in turn replaced by a twinebinder, so there was an improvement.

At that time the steam-engine had also been improved. It was equipped with heavy chains which drove the hind wheels, so it was moved by its own power. Later on it was improved with gears instead of chains. The separator had no self-feeders in those days, but had to be hand fed, which was a hard and dirty job. The feeder was assisted by two men who cut the bands of the bundles or sheeves, shoving it over to the feeder. The threshing was done from settings of from two to six stacks. There was also another threshing machine called Stanley Jones; with separator and engine on the same frame, which was hauled around with a team.

When I was around 16 to 18, oxen were mostly used, even for transportation, or else we had to walk wherever we wanted

to go. My sisters and I often drove up to 10—12 miles to visit other young people.

The first Bicycle patented had a great big front-wheel, and a small wheel at the back, so the rider was sitting very high. Some riders had dangerous experiences when they tumbled off.

The first Automobile I saw was in 1910 or 1911. It was driven with a chain drive similar to a manure-spreader, without any protection from the weather. Just think of the great difference in the Automobiles of our day.

My First Homestead Story

When I was only 15 years of age I left home with only 50 cents in my pockets, and my destination Hermon, Minn., was 120 miles away. My cousin was a partner on the journey and his possessions totalled 75 cents and one pound of gensing root, which he had later sold for \$1.25.

The first day we travelled 30 miles, following the railroad track most of the time. The second day we travelled about the same distance and that night we slept in a section house which was close by the track. We were soon fast asleep, sometimes in the middle of the night a freight came snorting along and blew the whistle when close to the building. The vibration from the train shook it like a leaf. When the whistle blew we both fell to the floor in fright and I thought that the cars were running over my head. Sometime after the train had gone I came to. This was the first alarming experience of my life. Next day at noon we took the train, having enough money to pay our fare the rest of the way.

During the next seven years I worked out a considerable portion of the time and stayed home with my father for the balance.

At the age of 27, I took up my first homestead. This was in 1897. Black Duck, Minn., where my homestead was located, was 90 miles to the nearest railroad, (either to Park Rapids or Fosten). Many a time I had walked this distance, with a full pack on my back. It generally took us three day to walk it one way, but once I made it in two days by leaving my homestead at five o'clock in the morning. I was accompanied by five other homesteaders. We intended to stop over night at Bemidgi, about 40 miles from home. We arrived at Bemidgi about five o'clock. After supper we decided to walk a few miles further and stop at some homesteader's over night as we were all nearly broke. About three miles north of Bemidgi we saw the last shack for miles, the rest was a wilderness. We continued walking

until 11 o'clock at night and had made no less than 55 miles that day. We arrived at what used to be a stopping place, but found the windows, floors, and the doors removed and a porcupine and a few mice in possession. We rested under this meagre shelter until daylight and continued on our way feeling as stiff as old horses. With a cup of coffee and a lunch we continued another nine miles to a stopping place which was called Lake George. Here we arrived about 10 o'clock. The stage coach left here at 1 p.m. for Park Rapids. It was loaded and could not take us all. I was willing to walk the last twenty-five miles of the way if one of the boys would accompany me. But each one agreed they could walk no farther. Consequently I had to make the journey alone. Before leaving I stretched myself out on two benches and had a couple of hours' sleep. Then I ate dinner and started out about one hour before the stage was due to leave. I arrived at Park Rapids just one hour later than the stage. My 90 miles was thus made in two days. I felt the effect of the trip for several weeks afterwards.

In the fall of '97 we drove from Cokato, Minn. to Black Duck, a distance of three hundred and fifty miles. The last portion of the journey from Park Rapids to our homestead at Black Duck was made over roads cut through heavy timber and soft swamps, while some of the roads were built of corduroy. This road brought us within two and a half miles of our homestead. From there on we had to cut our own road on the surveyed blazed line, going over creeks and through heavy timber. It took us three days till we could get our team and wagon to the homestead.

The first thing we did was to put up a shelter for our horses. We had a small tent to crawl into. A heavy snow fell and all the underbush and spruce limbs were loaded with wet snow which saturated our clothes as soon as we began to work. We were soaked to the skin, day in and day out. The only way we could get dry was to pull tamarack logs together and make a hot fire at night and dry our clothes on our bodies. Once my boots were frozen so solid to my feet that I could not get them off until I thawed them out. Later we built a small shack to live in. This was about 12 by 14 feet with a pole roof covered with hay and earth. It rained or snowed heavily every day, dripping through the roof.

I had a piece of tin and three stove pipes along with me so I made a fire place with an open front out of stones. I used the tin for the top and made one hole through which I put the stove pipe and another to put the frying pan or kettle on.

We had a sack of flour and had counted on getting a moose

or deer for meat. Since we were inexperienced hunters we were unsuccessful. The moose and deer however were plentiful. Our meals consisted of mush and pancakes and for a change, pancakes and mush.

Our roof leaked like a sieve. Especially were we conscious of this fact when we prepared our meals. The heat of the fireplace melted the snow on the roof, and our pancakes and mush were well flavored with wet clay drops.

Our bed consisted of round poles with hay for spring and mattress. Sacks were nailed under the ceiling over the beds to guard us against the ever-dripping roof. The dirt floor was always black except when a few white chips were scattered around. It was never necessary to do any scrubbing.

It was not long until we got thoroughly tired of our diet, so I took some flour in a sack and rode seven miles to a family that had just moved in. I asked them to bake some bread which they promised to do. Two days later I went for the bread, placing it in a sack which I slung over the horse's back, and started for home.

When I got about half way home it got quite dark. The timber wolves must have smelled the fresh bread. They followed me on both sides through the heavy timber and brush. The road was so narrow, that, a team and wagon could hardly get through. The wolves kept coming closer and closer until I believed I felt my cap lifting off my head with fear. I got close to a birch tree, and gathered a good deal of loose bark. Timber wolves are very much afraid of fire and I intended to light some with matches that I held in my hand in an attempt to scare them away if they got too close. However as soon as I arrived at an opening in the bush the wolves ceased to follow and I arrived safely home. My brother-in-law and his brother, who were living with me were very glad to see fresh bread.

Towards the end of November we steered our course backwards to our old home, a distance of 350 miles. On the way between Bemidje and Park Rapids we encountered some hunters who had seven deer. They asked us if we could take the deer as far as the railway station for them. In the course of the conversation we discovered that their destination was on our way home, so instead of just taking them to the station we delivered them right to their homes in Long Prairie. When we were unloading the deer the trappers told us to leave one in the wagon for the trouble of carrying the rest of them. This was gladly received for on the way home our meals consisted of bread, deer meat, and coffee. The water for our coffee was obtained by melting snow along the roadside. We ate only twice a day.

As we travelled homeward it grew quite cold. The snow was about ten inches deep, making the journey quite heavy for the horses. Although we spend some anxious moments along the trail, we reached home at last after having travelled ten days. We walked most of the way in order to keep warm.

The following winter I fell in love with Miss Amanda Sundwal and we were married in the cold month of February. The following fall we made the journey to our little cabin in the woods. My poor shack was not much to offer a young bride used to a far nicer home and surrounded by numerous friends and neighbors. That winter I built a log house 16 by 26 feet which was a slight improvement over the first one having rough lumber floor, a stove, two windows, two home-made chairs, a home-made table, a cupboard, a bed and some benches. We remained here all winter and the following summer my wife stayed there alone while I went back to my old home in Minnesota to make enough money to keep us over the next winter.

It was not too lonely for my wife, for across the road from our new home lived my sister and brother-in-law. On one occasion when my wife was alone a porcupine came walking into the house. My wife kicked at it and one of the quills went right through her leather shoe and into her foot. It was very painful for some time because porcupine quills are difficult to remove owing to the fact that they are sharp as needles.

The following winter I had a good team of horses. I cut a great many white pine logs and hauled them to the saw mill where I received \$5.00 per 1000 feet. It took about three loads of logs to make a thousand feet, and each load had to be hauled two and a half miles. The following winter I received \$7.00 per thousand. This continued the next year also. My loads were sometimes made up of white pine logs and some telephone posts. It was necessary to rise at 4:30 a.m. and I usually had my horses unharnessed at 8 o'clock at night. We made our own relief orders out and paid for them by the sweat of our brows.

Our first child Olivea, was born here in the bush home on April 1st. In those days we had no doctor or nurse. The nearest doctor was ninety miles away.

On one occasion I went out hunting partridges. I sighted some which flew into a cedar swamp covering a stretch of over 200 acres. Into it I followed them, and before I was aware of it, it became dark. I lost myself and walked around for hours making no progress. The trees were so close together that even in the broad daylight the sun scarcely shone through the branches. At last I fired a shot and my brother-in-law started out to help me, calling out at the top of his voice as he came along. In an

half an hour he had rescued me. This saved me from spending an unhappy night in the cold cedar swamp.

On one occasion my brother-in-law, Ole B. Johnson, was through bush when he spied a bear and fired a shell at him. The bear stood up on his hind legs and Ole, finding that he had no more shells and seeing the bear headed in his direction, turned and fled as fast as his legs would carry him. Every moment he feared to look back thinking that the bear was right behind. He ran for a quarter of a mile before finding courage to turn around only to discover that the bear had given up the chase.

In those days it was necessary to clear about ten acres within five years in order to prove a homestead. It was necessary to remain on the property during that time.

As soon as I had proved up on my homestead I turned my way back to my father's home in Cokato, where for two years I successfully operated a butcher shop close to my father's home. My shop was also located close to a creamery.

During this time, throughout the states, Western Canada was well advertised as a great wheat country, both by pamphlets and newspapers. I like thousands of others got the Canada fever and went to locate another new home. This I did in the spring of 1903, finally settling on the land the following year in the wild and woolley west. "My Canadian Homestead" story will tell of homesteading in the Govan district, since famed for the quality of it's wheat.

My Second Homestead Story

I took my homestead in June 1903. I then came to Regina and then to Craik to look for a homestead but all the good land was taken up. We then went back to Lumsden, and finding a land locator with two outfits going out to what is now known as the Govan district, I joined with their company.

This company had all the conveniences of camping necessities and in this manner we travelled over the wild prairies. The only guide being the compass and the section mounds. Coming back to Regina I then filed on my homestead which is the south east quarter of section thirty-two in township twenty-seven and range twenty-two west of the second meridian, and which is still my home. I then went back to Minnesota where I had my family.

In April 1904, I hoisted the flag for Canada. We took a settler's car from Black Duck, Minnesota to Bemidge, and from there wanted a contract to Lumsden, Sask., but they would not bill it further than Regina. I shipped my five horses, one cow,

sleigh, wagon and a few household goods and filled the balance of the car with cedar posts. Crossing the line by Gretna, the car still on the U.S. side, I carried water from Canada and watered my horses to give them a real drink of Canadian water. On coming to Regina, I found lots of company, thousands of settlers with their live stock tied to wagons, fences and a lot running loose on the prairie north of the railway where the oil refineries, wholesale houses and implement warehouses are now situated.

After looking around and seeing all the horses and cattle I began to question where to be located and found out that they were going north west for one hundred and some for two hundred miles, but could not get through on account of the flood in the Qu'appelle valley, water standing for several feet over the rail at Lumsden, so then I began to recognize what I was up against. Some of the settlers had already been there for three weeks and had no idea when they could get through. My hay and oats were gone and \$2.00 a bale was the price for hay and 60 cents per bushel for oats. I then met a man who said he got his feed from the railway company so then I thought ha! ha! I'll try that scheme too, so I made myself brave and went to the superintendent showing him my contract and asking him for feed for my horses. He looked at my contract and then looked at me and said, "Your contract reads for Regina and in Regina you are. We can't supply you with any feed."

I put my hat on, went outside the door and thought to myself, I am out of luck. After putting my hand in my pocket and pulling out my first contract which read "destination to Lumsden" I went in again, a little peeved and with more nerve than ever, I pulled out my contract and said. "What about this?" He said nothing but gave me a slip to go to the feed store and order two bales of hay, five bushels of oats and a meal ticket. I said "Thank you and good bye" and felt like a prince.

I got all my meals and feed for my horses for five days. I heard that a freight train was going down as far as the valley close to Lumsden. The next day I went to the superintendent and asked if they would take my car as far as possible and then I would be willing to unload. Next morning they started to switch the cars around so I saw the conductor about taking my car, but he answered "We can't take any more," but then I pulled out a Yankee Dollar and told him it would be his if he took me along so he said, "We will see if we can," so my car was also switched in.

My brother-in-law and three other men went with me in the car as they had homesteads north of mine and wanted to have my company as far as my homestead.

We rode as far as the valley to a spur where they left us and

we had to unload as best way we could, but I had lots of help. We hauled the fence posts that we had in our car up to a farmer's yard close by and had our two wagons set up and loaded about 700 pounds in each. We then began to figure how we could get across the valley. We had heard of a wooden bridge down the valley about three miles, which extended across the main stream. In the morning of the third day after arriving we attempted to cross. It was about a mile across the valley in water and alkali mud. By cutting brush for the horses to walk on, and with prys to weight up the wagon when we were stuck, we succeeded to get across the valley a little before sunset. After we got across we threw our hats and hollered, Hurrah, and if we men were negroes or white men it would be hard for anyone to tell. The horses were of various colors but when we got across they were all one alkali mud. We then drove as far as Craven, which is on the north side of the valley, and camped over night. Next morning I bought some lumber for my homestead house and then our journey continued until we came to Strasbourg Post Office that night, this being about the end of the road going north.

The next day we followed a little trail going in a north westerly direction to Arlington Beach, where a few settlers were located. This trail, however, took us about eight miles too far, west, but we camped over night on the prairie under cover of the wagons. The following day we found the homestead, that being the ninth of May, 1904. We found the corner mounds, unloaded our lumber, and made a shelter to crawl under. For the following days and nights there was considerable wind, cold rain and sleet. We were chilled, and the horses tied to the wagons stood and shivered, so we decided to start our journey back to Craven for more lumber.

My brother-in-law, Mr. E. Sundwalt and myself started off, leaving three men to start building the house. We started straight south against the wind, rain and sleet to try to strike Strasbourg Post Office, which was thirty miles distant. The only thing to direct us was the wind, so after many crooks and turns around water sloughs we found the place about dark. The following day we got to Craven, arriving there just about dark. Next day we loaded our lumber and started a few miles on our return trip. The fifth day after leaving we returned again to the homestead with the lumber and some household provisions. The men left to build the little shack were sure glad to see us return, one coming to meet us. All they had to eat for three days was mush, pancakes and milk. They said if they had not had the cow so as they could get milk it would have been hard to stay. I pulled out a smoked ham from my grocery box and they licked their lips and smiled when they saw it and a couple of loaves of bread, then we sang "The Maple Leaf Forever."

We unloaded our lumber and rested for one day and then started back as I had a letter from my wife in which she said they were to be in Lumsden in a couple of days. The same road was travelled on this trip through Craven and then to Lumsden. The family were already there when we arrived. With my wife and family were her father, sister, two brothers and four other men from Cokato, Minn. They also had a car of settlers' effects. We stopped one day to buy provisions and to load the wagons. Early the next morning, myself, wife, my oldest daughter 4 years old, oldest son ten months old, and my wife's sister started out to our Canadian home, 60 miles ahead of us. There was a house to be seen now and again until we reached Strasbourg Post Office, but from there the next thirty miles, there was no sign that human life had ever been there except for the corner mounds made by the surveyors, and which were mostly grown over with grass, so that all that was to be seen was the prairie, the Heavenly sky, antilopes, a few coyotes, and badgers now and again sticking their heads out of their mounds. The buffalo at this time had already disappeared but the trails could be seen very plainly running in a north westerly direction. Bones were scattered here and there and everywhere over the wild and rugged prairies.

The third day after starting, just before sundown we thought we should be close to our homestead but we had missed our corner mounds by going around water sloughs. The way we measured distance between one mound and another was by tying a hankerchief to the spoke of the wheel and by thus counting the revolutions of the wheel we knew just about where the next mound should be, but sometimes the mounds would be out in water sloughs so we would miss them. We passed through at this time just about where the Town of Govan is now, and about two miles north on a high hill where we could see over ten miles in every direction we stopped, but no house could be seen further north or east and we could not figure out where our home could be. In the west, however, a distance of about three miles we saw a building which looked to us like a sod house and I said to my wife, "Someone must have moved in there since I left."

We stopped for a while and thought of what we should do, and the wife said, "The sun is nearly down and we must have some shelter for the children," so we decided to hit for that place, which we did.

The house was built on a low place and when we got within half a mile of the house, I recognized the shack, stopped the team and hollered, "Hurrah, and said to my wife, "Why, we are going to our own home."

The carpenters had the house fairly well completed, walls and floor and tar paper on the roof so from a distance it looked like

a sod house, but the thought of it to us was a palace in the wilderness. The carpenters that built the house, then wanted to go to their homestead, which was thirty miles north west. They then made a boat and I took them to the north end of the Last Mountain Lake. The water was high, but with the boat, I landed them, their tool chests and suitcases on the north side, giving them some meat and bread, I bid them farewell and wished them good luck.

Two days after we arrived, the rest of the company came from Lumsden. They helped to build a sod stable for our horses and some went to Last Mountain hills, a distance of twenty miles, for poles for the barn and wood for our stoves. The men arriving at this time all took land around here but some got discouraged after a time and left.

About a week after the whole company was here my father-in-law's horses strayed away and also our cow. A couple of men went in search as far as Strasbourg, and two more on horse back over the prairies, about three day later they found them close to Last Mountain Lake, not far from Arlington Beach. We were glad when we located them, especially the cow, because the milk was needed for the children.

Later on in the summer we started to put up hay, but cut when the prairie needles were the worst. My uncle was driving the mower and he took a bunch of hay to sit on, which was the worst thing he could do, for he wore woolen pants and a sweater, and after a while he jumped off the mower seat looking like a porcupine with the needles sticking to his clothes. He called over to me but I stood and laughed.

"Oscar," he said, "if I was you I would go plumb crazy, look at me, what kind of hay have they in Canada?" I only stood and laughed, and he said, "All you have in this world you have here. Here is only a wilderness, no roads, no schools, no church, hardly any people to be seen, sixty miles to get a match and sixty miles to get a plug of tobacco. I thank God I have only a suitcase. Oh, if I had wings like that hawk flying there wouldn't I take a bee-line for Minnesota again." And so he left one of the best homesteads in the district and went back, and died in the Old People's Home in Chisago City.

I tried to explain to him that we were getting this land to improve it, and in a few years we would have all these things, but he could not see it that way.

That summer I made fifteen trips to Lumsden and sometimes ten miles beyond to buy my oats. Each trip, as a rule took five days. I also broke twenty-five acres of land on the homestead. Late in the fall I put sod on the outside of the house in place of siding and this also took the place of plaster. This house kept us warm for seven years and some of which were very severe winters.

We were the only two families in the district the first summer, but a number of old and young bachelors came in and they came with their sacks of flour on their backs asking my wife to bake it into bread. Sometimes two and three of them from different directions met, and they were very contented when their sacks were filled with bread. Those times have passed however and now these bachelors have their own bread bakers which also make a great improvement in the district.

In the fall I took my team and went out threshing south of Lumsden, working at a wage of \$1.50 for man and \$1.50 for team and made \$65 so I could buy some oats and groceries to keep us through the winter.

In the spring of 1905, I wrote a friend of mine to lend me \$150 so as I could get my seed wheat and oats, he did this but then I was bust again. As it was however, homesteaders were coming in and I got a job breaking and seeding and made \$60 so I could go to Lumsden and get more oats and groceries. The settlers coming in who were going north of us, stopped with us so we made a few dollars that way.

At this time the prairie fires were very severe, sometimes having to fight the flames day and night. The only method of control was by breaking and back-firing and by using wet sacks and brooms. We could put it out with side winds, but with a strong wind it would jump a distance of 16 to 20 feet. Sometimes at night we would have to go and wake our neighbors fearing otherwise they might be burnt. On one occasion, when two fires met, newspapers could be read in the middle of the night, and yet the fires were some miles apart.

In the summer of 1905, I made five trips to Lumsden for oats, machinery, and household provisions. On these trips we camped out under tents and on one occasion we were caught in a very severe storm about fifteen miles north of Lumsden. Seeing the storm coming, we pulled into a bluff and pitched the tent in a hurry, got our flour and groceries into it and about this time it started to rain with a heavy wind blowing. An old man by the name of Curtin who located not far from my homestead came driving as fast as he could to find shelter with us in our tent. We helped him to get his horses unhitched and get some of his groceries in our tent. The storm was getting worse all the time. It pulled out the posts which held the tent, but with two men inside and one to drive the poles, we fastened it as securely as we possibly could. The storm continued all night and at times we were lifted from the ground when we tried to keep the tent in place. The tent was badly wrecked but as luck would have it we saved ourselves and the groceries.

The family at home sought a safer place of lodging than in

the lightly built house so the sod stable served as their place of safety in the terrific storm.

That fall, 1905, we threshed 520 bushels of wheat and a thousand bushels of oats which I sold for seed and feed the next spring.

In the fall of 1906 we had something over 2,000 bushels of wheat, and about 1,600 bushels of oats. The railroad was then built as far as Strasbourg, so I hauled a couple of loads of wheat there.

A neighbor of mine also hauled two loads with oxen, thirty miles over rough roads was a long way to haul grain for 60 cents per bushel. My neighbor started with his oxen about 3 o'clock in the morning, went to Strasbourg. On the way back he laid down in the wagon box and went to sleep, when he awakened he was walking on the trail and thought he heard the wagon ahead of him. He walked and ran until he came clear home but found no oxen, so he started back again with his lantern, a distance of seven miles; he found his oxen lying down chewing their cud, quite content in the middle of the trail. How he had gotten out of the wagon he didn't know, but wonders sometimes happen.

In 1907 the railroad was completed through to Lanigan and now we could load our grain in a car at Govan. When we saw the first train come through we jumped and yelled and threw our hats as high as we could, and gave the C.P.R. a hearty welcome.

We are located in one of the best districts with the best of neighbors and are four and half miles north-west of Govan, one of the popular towns of Saskatchewan.

The times have been hard in the years from 1928 to 1938, but to a great extent we have ourselves to blame as too much speculation, grafters and sharks have led us into temptations, so I warn them to keep the road allowance straight ahead and not enter my premises.

I have travelled over most of the States in the U.S.A. and as far south as the southern part of Florida, and I will agree there are nicer places to live, but for prospects and opportunities this country of ours cannot be excelled. With the Wheat Pool, Poultry Pool, and Cattle Pool we have great prospects ahead of us and I am sure from now on the Canadian west will be exceedingly prosperous. As the story goes of the two frogs that fell into the cream can. One of them said "I can't and I won't, and I won't and I can't." The other one said "I will and I can, and I can and I will," and it kicked around until the cream was churned to butter, climbed up and jumped out. And so can we, churning the cream to butter and we will all climb the ladder to success.

This is part of the homestead experiences of a Swede-Yankee-Canuck.

The Peace River Homestead Story

In the early summer of 1928, just after the crop on the old Govan homestead had been seeded, we set out to see the great promising Peace River district. Our party consisted of seven: my two sons, Alvin and Harry, my son-in-law Mr. Swan Lundeen, two friends Ross Smith and Bob Gasser, and myself. Our loads were divided equally between two cars, and on the leading automobile, covering one complete side was the motto "Peace River or Bust." This large sign enabled those whom we passed on our journey to learn something of our burning ambition. From some it drew a smile, from others a look of sympathy.

On our journey from Govan to the Peace River we passed through many cities, towns and villages, among them being Saskatoon, Battleford, Lloydminster, Edmonton, Athabaska, and Smith. In the town of Smith was the end of the road as far as our automobiles were concerned. I think that the last forty miles of our journey just before arriving at Smith was one of the most trying parts. We were facing new pioneer problems. The roads in this district were particularly muddy, and on some occasions we found it necessary to make small improvised bridges of small spruce poles. Even with these careful precautions we often had to pry our cars loose from the mud.

At Smith we could no longer use our cars. We must forsake the roads and use the iron horse. In a little while our automobiles were loaded upon flat railway cars. We found travelling much easier this way and we were glad to be able to utilize the services which the railway company afforded. But even this ride was very rough in comparison to the modern railway services offered on the prairies. It reminded us of the times when we used to ride over the old corduroy roads in the wagon. We were rocked from side to side and we expected any moment to be sent hurtling from the cars into one of the ditches. The railway followed for the most part along the shores of the Lesser Slave Lake which is about ninety miles in length. When we arrived at McLennan, a divisional point on the railroad, we unloaded our automobiles and refilled them with gasoline and oil. I say refilled because they had been emptied of these inflammable liquids at Smith by the railway officials just before they were loaded. We then made our way to Peace River Landing, where the government land office was located. Here we procured our plats on homestead lands which were vacant.

At the town of Peace River we crossed the Peace River on the combined traffic and railway bridge, the only bridge that spanned the river. Our next crossing was at Dunvegan. This time we crossed on the ferry. We continued south, passing over the Saddle Mountains to Grand Prairie. From Grand Prairie we journeyed

north-westward through Beaver Lodge, Dawson Creek, Rolla, and thence to Taylor Flats, where we again crossed the river on a ferry.

On both sides of the Peace River we ran into other difficulties. The Peace River Hill at that time was very steep and not graded. We found it necessary to tie a long rope in front of each car. Five men pulled, one stayed behind with a large stone to block the back wheel, and I drove. In this way, fetching the car ahead three or four feet at a time, we were able to bring each car in turn to the top of the hill.

The last fourteen miles of our journey, from where we last crossed the river, to Fort St. John, was very difficult. We found it necessary to make several bridges, and often we could hardly make progress. Many times it required all the power of our engines together with six men pulling on a strong rope in front, to make our way through the mud. This road was truly a track in a wilderness, and if progress was to be made at all, it must be made solely by us, for there were none near to help us with horses or tractors, etc.

At Fort St. John we found ourselves at an old trading post belonging to the Hudson Bay Company, for over a century. Here we found the sub-land agent and procured new plats on homestead lands. It was necessary to leave our automobiles here and secure the use of a team of horses. From Fort St. John we headed directly north through the Indian reserve for a distance of fifteen miles. We located just a little north of the reserve at a place which is now called North Pine Post Office, B.C. My 2 sons, Harry and Alvin, my son-in-law, Swan Lundeen and Ross Smith, located their homesteads here. We filed for Clarence Landstrom by proxy. It was not until the year 1930 that I took up my homestead here. The day we located the homesteads was much different from most of our dry dusty days on the prairies. I shall never forget that day. It rained and rained until we were soaked to the skin. It truly was not pleasant but it was promising.

On our return trip by team to Fort St. John we saw a small house along the roadside and I happened to ask the driver, "Who lives there?"

He said "An Italian lives there."

"Where did he come from?" I enquired. He answered, "From Saskatchewan."

"His name is not Schilly?" I replied. "Yes," he said, "That's his name."

"Has he a son by the name of Steve?" I asked. "Yes," he said.

"Well," said I, "that must be the same man who used to be my neighbor in Saskatchewan. He left two years ago and nobody knew just where he had gone to."

Coming into Fort St. John, we filed in the land office on six quarters and then sought lodgings for the night.

Early the next morning, just after breakfast, I started up the road on foot, to pay a visit to my one-time Italian neighbor, Shilly. When I arrived at his farm, I saw him out in the field picking tree roots, so I walked up quietly to him and stood beside him before he saw me. Then he looked up and stared at me and said, "Is it a ghost or is it you Landstrom?"

A good hand shake soon convinced him I was still in the body and we were very happy to renew old friendships. A hearty invitation was immediately extended to me to bring our party there for dinner and for supper that same day. This we gladly did, and when we set out the next day for Govan, we left feeling that when we should return there was at least one home in this great promising Peace River district where we would always be welcome. On the return trip we loaded our automobiles again on flat cars at McLennan and unloaded them at Westlock several hours later. We were all happy to be on good roads again and to hit the shortest trail that led back home.

Our second trip to the great promising Peace River district was made after seeding in the early summer of 1929. This time instead of two automobiles we equipped our grain truck with a camping outfit and all the necessary food stuffs and most of my daughter's and son-in-law's personal belongings. This together with our part of nine made up a fairly good load.

On this trip I remained in Govan. The party going to Peace River was made up of my three sons, Clarence, Harry and Alvin, my daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Swan Lundeen, and their two children, and a man by the name of Bertel Martinson.

They were fairly well protected from the rain and hot sun by a heavy tarpaulin which completely covered the back of the truck.

This year they looked forward to a more pleasant trip than on the previous year, more pleasant at least as good roads were concerned for we had learned that the government had been active in making the roads serviceable. They found road work was in progress along the highway that paralleled the Lesser Slave Lake. These roads were even at their best, not to be compared with our mid-west highways, but they were happy to learn that corduroy roads had been put in on the low places along the lake. On several occasions however, they found it necessary to seek the assistance of farmers with their teams in order to release the truck from the mud holes along the way. This time they were very glad to be able to make the entire journey by truck. As the muddy roads increased, their progress became slower and slower. Some days they only made a few miles. Indeed they found that it was

necessary to ship part of their load by rail before they reached the final destination.

At Hythe, Alberta, was the end of the railway at that time. My son Clarence purchased a caterpillar tractor, a 22-inch plough, a wagon, and some supplies, and with this load of purchases he started out for Fort St. John, a distance of about 130 miles to the homestead there. They found they could co-operate nicely with the two loads, for whenever they were stuck with the truck, Clarence was there with his tractor to pull them out. At mealtimes they returned the kindness.

The Indians along the way gazed at the little tractor tugging away at such heavy loads, they were amazed and wondered just where all the power could come from. They were so afraid of the tractor that they stood at a distance and refused to come near.

During the summer of '29 everybody worked hard from morning till night. When early fall came there was about thirty-five acres of land cleared on all the homesteads. Then just before harvest time everybody except Harry returned home, and made preparation to harvest the crop at Govan.

After that fall, I, with Ross Smith and Mr. Groger journeyed up to Peace River to look over the land. When at Fort St. John I bought a ten foot disk, and in a little while had disked all the land which had been broken. The following month I worked in pulling stumps and picking stones. Then in the late fall I walked many miles to the nearest station and returned home.

In the early spring of 1930 I shipped a carload of settlers' effects, consisting of four horses, two cows, pigs, chickens, and a considerable supply of farm machinery to Hythe, Alberta.

I, with my son Alvin, rode in the car with the settlers' effects, while my daughter and son-in-law, with their two children, left in the Ford sedan. We both left at the same time, and when I stepped out of the car at Hythe, to tell the breakman where I desired it to be placed, he said, "There is someone calling you." I looked up and found it to be my son-in-law. It was strange, we both had arrived at the station at the same time.

We unloaded our car at Hythe. The cattle were glad of the opportunity to get some exercise after being cramped up in the car for six days. As Lundeen and his family proceeded they found the road very difficult. Several times his whole family found it necessary to walk, while he made his way over the steeper parts of the hills.

The Indians seemed quite interested in seeing a woman with her two children, all of light complexion in comparison to their wives and families.

At the station at Hythe we loaded the two wagons with the settlers effects. My son Alvin, loaded the chickens and the pigs in

his wagon and tied the two cows behind. Thinking that this load would require a little more time on the road, he left one day before the second team.

The other wagon was a large separator wagon and was heavily loaded with machinery. We felt, however, that the team and the Fordson tractor could easily handle the second load. No sooner had we started out than a heavy rain began to pour down on us, and the tractor and the horses were soon rendered helpless on account of the heavy mud. Two horses were standing in the mud to their knees. For three days we were forced to remain in this helpless condition at the side of the road. On the fourth day we decided to take what we could with the team and leave the tractor and what we had on that wagon.

The task of pulling a heavily loaded wagon through the mud was no easy one for the horses and it was not long until we found that we had overdone them. One of our horses developed a disease called timps and we feared that we were going to be left helpless on the side of the road.

Fortunately for us, towards evening we caught up with two other parties going up to St. John with two covered wagons. One party had four horses on his wagon, and noticing how sick one of mine was he offered to let me have one of his, while I tied my sick horse behind my wagon. This offer was gladly accepted and I was thankful that my maker had helped me out in this hour of need. After several days—days in which the life of my sick horse hung in the balance—I noticed a sign of improvement and gradually he was restored to health again.

I was very grateful in my heart for the kindness which this pioneer friend had shown in lending his horse. I was very desirous of showing my thanks, and did not have to wait long, for I soon discovered that they really were a very poor family. They had six small children, and all the food they possessed was one bag of flour. With this they made pancakes morning, noon and night. Their horses were not as well provided for, there was neither oats nor hay for them.

Fortunately I was well supplied with provisions. I had a good half barrel of bacon and ham and about one hundred dozen eggs. These came in very handy when it came to showing my appreciation to my poor. "We shared our mutual woes and our mutual burdens bore."

My son Alvin, who had started his journey with the cattle a half day before us was not held up like we were by any rains. Consequently he made a few miles progress each day, while we, for three days, had been anchored in the mud. Alvin, however, ran out of supplies, and soon he was without food for either himself or the stock. Near Cut Bank the cows had been allowed to have their

leisure and feed along the side of the road. This privilege they abused, and instead they wandered into the thick Alder bushes. For half a day Alvin searched for them without success. Having not found them by sunset he went back a short distance to Cut Bank and pitched his tent for the night. Early the next morning he looked out from the camping place, the direction where he had lost the cows and there they were coming down the road slowly towards the camp. The little river that flowed near the camp was no doubt the magnet that drew the thirsty cows to the camp.

It was certainly no pleasure chasing cows through the bush with one's shoes worn out. If I were an advisor to pioneer settlers I would strongly advocate bells for the purpose of tying around the necks of all four footed farm animals.

Mr. Lundeen, with his wife and family, were the first of our party to reach the Peace River homestead where Clarence had been since early spring. As soon as Clarence learned that the rest of the party were on the road he borrowed a horse and started out to meet us. He arrived at Cut Bank just after Alvin had found the cows. It was a great relief to Alvin to see his brother, for as we have already said, he was almost destitute and feeling quite blue.

From Cut Bank the boys went on together and at their first opportunity they borrowed heavy horses from a settler on the road and in this way they continued until they arrived at their homesteads. Three days later I arrived with the second team. The rest of the farm machinery and the tractor we left on the roadside and were not able to get them for two months owing to the incessant rains and muddy roads.

This spring I filed on a homestead located south-east half section 13, township 86 range 19 west 6, about three miles from where my sons were located. This settlement is the farthest northern agricultural settlement in Canada. I managed to break thirty-six acres before 1934. Mr. Groger came up again in the spring of 1930 and was also looking for a homestead. I had heard that there was good land across the North Pine river so we decided to go across and look things over. This land had never been surveyed and it was a wilderness where nobody except Indians and trappers had been.

The river bed of the North Pine is about eight hundred feet below the land level and most of the places it is slate stone and sandstone. The walls of the river banks are perpendicular for the most part, and there are only a few places where one can descend and ascend on the river. We managed to get down to the edge of the water. Here we found the remains of an old building where a rancher or trapper had remained for a while. We decided that we should cross the river at this point, but how to make a successful

crossing with a current travelling fifteen miles per hour was quite a problem.

We found a few spruce tops, the logs of which had been used in the construction of the cabin. Ten of these tops we tied together with a strong rope and then braced them by nailing poles across each end. When our raft was completed, we tied our pack sacks, and guns to one of the logs. We did this in case our raft should crash on the rocks and be smashed; we could probably recover our belongings a little farther down the river.

Huge boulders the size of a prairie home had tumbled down from the sides of the river and now lay scattered here and there in mid stream. Should we have hit one of these it would have been good bye to our frail raft and everything. We each secured a ten foot pole in order to free ourselves from shore. (I might add at this time that we both could swim.) Everything went fine as long as we could reach the bottom of the river with our poles, but soon we were out where the poles became far too short and where the current was getting stronger and stronger. It was not long until we were drifting swiftly down the river in a helpless condition. We drifted about half a mile in this way until we ran near a sand bar which allowed us to reach the bed of the river with our poles and later anchor our frail raft to a huge boulder on the opposite shore. As we crossed the river (rather nervously) we were prepared for any sudden emergency. We had cast off all our heavy outer garments and were ready for a sudden ducking if necessary.

We succeeded in finding a small inlet along the opposite shore and managed to climb the bank of the river here. We arrived at the top of the other bank shortly before sunset at about 10 p.m. I might mention that during the month of June it is possible to read a newspaper outside as late as eleven p.m. On the top of the bank we discovered a very small and low built shelter, something like two or three dog kennels placed side by side with the centre partition removed. Evidently this had been a night shelter for some hunter. Here we camped for the night.

I had in my pack sack a camping outfit, frying pan, pail of syrup, and a piece of bacon. As the black bears were quite plentiful there, and since they are especially fond of ham, I suggested to Mr. Groger that the safest place for our food supplies was under my pillow. I rolled these things up again in my pack sack and put them under my pillow.

During the night I was suddenly awakened by a queer noise. I grasped for my gun quickly, thinking that there was a bear coming to get our ham. Just as I was taking up my gun Mr. Groger snored again, this time quite loudly, I was glad he did. We had a real laugh about it in the morning, and we have joked about it

many times since. Mr. Groger didn't know it but he was playing bear with me while he slept.

The next morning we continued eastward, and as we journeyed we noticed several places where the bears had been. There were several rotten logs which they had torn open in their efforts to find the big jumbo ants which lodge there. Deer and moose were also plentiful.

We remained on the east side of the river for three days and we managed to locate a large open flat of several sections. Here and there was a little scrub bush on it. This land had been burnt over at the time of the Klondyke gold rush. It was during the Klondyke gold rush that a pack trail was made through this part of the country. We followed this trail for several miles. On the large open flat just mentioned Mr. Groger squatted a homestead for himself, his son, his daughter's brother-in-law, Mr. Willys Currey. His squatting was a very simple thing on this occasion. We just cut down a large tree, trimmed the bar on one side and wrote on it the names and date of those squatting here. Then we built a little shack, just large enough for a cover, and rested inside until morning. Later when we arrived at the land office Mr. Groger reported what he had done. In a few months the land was surveyed and Mr. Groger and his family proved their homesteads.

Our return trip across the river was just as difficult as the first crossing. At several places coming down the bank we found it necessary to untie our pack sacks and throw them down ahead of us in order that we should not be over-balanced and tumble headlong into the river below. We crossed the river again successfully and coming to the other side we found ourselves close to a short elbow in the river. The water was whirling around this elbow and we were soon driven by the current between some windfalls, in fact, our raft went in under one of these fallen trees. Seeing that our frail raft was soon to strike the shore where a landing would be much more difficult, we quickly grasped our pack sacks and guns, and as our raft neared one of these logs protruding from the shore we quickly jumped upon it and were soon safe on shore again. We turned before going and bid our adieus to our old faithful raft.

From the river to my homestead is a distance of seven miles. It was quite a distance to travel, especially since we were tired and our food supplies were completely exhausted. Again we were very fortunate. We had not walked far until we came to a small homesteader's shack. The people were very hospitable, but I am sure our visit with them on that occasion was very hard on their groceries.

That summer I did a good deal of scouting around the district and in this way I was able to meet many of the people who are the

pioneers of the great Peace River country. On July 1, with my three sons, Clarence, Alvin and Harry, returned in the old Ford car to Govan.

In the fall of '31 we again went up to Peace River. This time we went by truck which took us five days. We went through Peace River Landing, Dunvegan, and Grande Prairie, to St. John. It was rather late in the fall, but there was no ice on the Peace River when we crossed on the ferry at Dunvegan. Next day we came to Taylor's Flat in order to again cross the river. Taylor's Flat is about 14 miles from Fort St. John. Coming down to the river we saw the ferry on the north side coming towards where we were. It was trying to make its way through the great sheets of ice which were floating down the river. As the ferry approached the shore, the ferryman called to us for help. The ice floes had carried the ferry quite a distance down stream. However, when the ferry got really close to the shore, the ferryman threw to us long heavy ropes which we grasped and anchored to trees on the bank.

That night our party stayed in a small shack by the river. The next day I, my son Alvin, Rudolf Weburg and Pete Smith crossed the river in a row boat, while Mrs. Landstrom stayed a week with a sick woman in the shack where we had stayed over night. The crossing was rather dangerous but we anchored safely in a little while on the opposite shore. From thence, we walked to our homesteads, a distance of twenty-six miles. A week later Mrs. Landstrom came to Fort St. John where we met her with the horses.

We spent the winter in cutting 450 logs, 200 were for the building of a barn 30 feet by 40 feet. These were all hauled home, a distance of about seven miles. Besides this we built a home-made saw mill. This was made with a table and rollers every three feet. We pushed the logs by hand to the saw, and when all was done we made some very good lumber. Just after New Years we went back to the river and brought our truck across on the ice. In the spring we again left for Saskatchewan.

In the fall of '32 we made another trip. We had eight in our party this time, Halder Doram, Mrs. Landstrom, Alvin, myself, and four Norwegian boys. This time we travelled by truck again. Our route lay through South Battleford, Edmonton and Slave Lake.

At Donnelly, Alberta, we broke the axle on the truck. We had it pulled into a garage owned by a man by the name of Jack Dale. Not having the necessary parts we immediately telegraphed to Edmonton for the new axle and expected it to arrive on Tuesday. Tuesday came but no axle. Trains came through from Edmonton only twice a week, so we expected it for certain on Friday, but Friday came and to our disappointment still no axle, and not until the following Tuesday did it arrive.

Donnelly is a small French Catholic town and the only place where we could stay was in the garage or the hotel where they kept a beer parlor, for which I had no taste. Waiting in this town became somewhat monotonous so I asked the hotel keeper if he had any work of any kind to give us and he said: "There is a wood pile if you want to split wood." "Any kind of work would suit me," I said. So I split wood, butchered pigs, and did a few other odd jobs for him.

Mr. Dale had a large heated garage. He repaired my battery, brakes, and put in the new axle. When I was about to leave I asked him to give me the bill of what I owed him. All he asked was the price of the axle and the differential grease. I looked at him and said, "What about the storage and your work." He answered, "I don't know your finances, but I know you are going to have a hard road ahead of you. I'll not charge you a cent more, and furthermore, if you ever get up against it, send me a telegram and I'll send you the money you need." I sincerely thanked him for his great kindness.

The hotelman where we stayed for eleven days, (I might add that we furnished our own food) was asked a similar question. Mr. Roberts, the proprietor put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Landstrom, you don't owe me a cent." I turned around to him and said to those standing near in the hotel, "I have travelled quite a bit, but have never received such kind hospitality in my travels." I thanked both him and his wife from the bottom of my heart. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts had given us quite a bit of food, and the morning we left they gave each one of our party a full meal.

When we made our first trips to Peace River we found it necessary to cross the river on the ferries, but these ferries have all been removed on account of the ice in the rivers. At Peace River we made our first stop at Donnelly. Here we re-filled our car with gas and crossed the Peace River on the traffic and railway bridge. Before we arrived at Berwyn we ran into snow-blocked roads. The last mile of the road was so full of snow that we had to shovel most of the way before we could reach Berwyn. Here we decided to remain for the night. We ate supper that evening in a Chinese restaurant. As we were eating, a man came in carrying a lantern. Soon I commenced a conversation with him. I found that he worked in a livery barn. When I discovered this I immediately seized the opportunity to get a place for the boys to sleep for the night. "How are chances," I said, "for the boys to take their blankets into the bunk house until morning?" "I'll go and ask the boss and I'll be back in a few minutes," he said. Then we started talking about different things, where we came from, and he said, "I came from Cokato, Minnesota." "Well," I said, "that is where I and the Mrs. came from." We were becoming quite chummy by this

time. Later he invited Mrs. Landstrom and myself to stay all night in their home. The boys took their blankets and mattresses into the bunk house and had a comfortable rest. During our talks about the different places where I had been I happened to tell him that I proved up a homestead at Black Duck, Minnesota. "Well," he said, "there's a fellow here who lives a mile out of town by the name of Brong who came from there." I smiled and said, "I know him quite well from my homestead days." In a little while I phoned him up. You can guess how surprised he was to hear my voice away up in that district. He then arranged to come in and get me in the morning as soon as daylight. He came, and for two days we had a most delightful visit in his home.

The skies began to cloud up and a little more snow came, so we thought it would be best to go as far as possible, to Fairview at least, and remain there until the ice should be strong enough to carry us across the river.

We arrived at Fairview in the afternoon. Here I was acquainted with two families, one by the name of Anderson. I located their place and asked them to help me find a small shack somewhere in the town until the ice in the river would be strong enough for us to cross on. They helped me locate a one-roomed house, 14 ft. by 18 ft. We were to call this home for a short time at least. We backed our truck to the front door and started to unload. As we were unloading, a man came over and looked at our truck, on the side of which was written, Govan, Sask. He asked me "Do you come from Govan?" I answered in the affirmative. "Why," he said, "I've been to your home, and my cousins are Tunolds and I stayed with them for a few months, years ago." He then excused himself and brought me over a little later, a hanging lamp, a bed, a stove, and a table. He then showed us where there was a well of good fresh water and directed us to a wood pile where he said we could have just as much as we needed. This was a real token of friendship when the weather was so cold.

The next day while I was walking on one of the sidewalks in Fairview a man stopped me and said, "Are you from Govan, Sask.?" and I said "Yes." "Is this Landstrom?" he asked, again I answered in the affirmative, "But I can't place you," I continued. "Well," he said, "I threshed at your place for two falls with C. W. Larson, my name is Lariety." I found out that he was running the elevator there. He invited me to his office and we talked for a long time about Govan. That evening we ate a bountiful supper in his home, and our conversation lasted until midnight.

The following day I talked with a man who was running a restaurant. I found out from him that he had been 80 miles north of the Peace River on the old Klondyke trail, where there was a small settlement on the prairie which is called Clear Prairie. He

believed that it would be possible for us to get to Clear Prairie, but what was beyond that he didn't know.

Fairview, where we were then staying was about 160 miles from Fort St. John, but the road which our friend suggested had not been travelled much since the great gold rush. We talked things over the next day and decided that we would at least give this road a trial. There were several things to our advantage to be considered if the road was at all passable. It was only half as far as the road we had at first planned to take, then travelling this way would be fairly easy since all the swamps and creeks would be frozen over. Then again, if we could go immediately this way, it would save a two-weeks wait for us until the Peace River froze over.

After having decided that we would make the trip we loaded our truck with half a barrel of gasoline, lubricating oil, fifty pounds of flour, some necessary groceries and started out. The first twenty-five miles of this new road were fairly good and we covered the distance in good time. After that, however, they were rough and crooked and it was much slower going.

About five miles before coming to the little settlement of Clear Prairie we found ourselves faced with a long steep hill, which we were unable to climb. I instructed the party to make a camp fire, while I should go and locate somebody to pull us over the hill. Soon I heard a settler cutting wood. I walked up to where he was and told him my story and he gladly offered to help us out of our difficulty. This new-found friend, Mr. Morgan by name, quickly drove his horses to his home and we soon unloaded what wood was on the sleighs and loaded the wagon box. Mrs. Morgan, a stout, pleasant woman, came to the door and called to me: "Hurry as quickly as you can, supper will be ready for you all as soon as you return." Words like these always sound good to a hungry Swede.

Soon I was hurrying down the trail thinking over my pioneer problems. When I drove near our party I could see the blaze of a warm camp fire and as I drew closer I was met with smiles of welcome. It was not long until we had the truck to the top of the steep hill. About an hour and a half later we were at the Morgan home, where we found a hearty meal awaiting us. We stayed with our new-found friends for two nights and a day and were most happy to receive of their kind hospitality.

In the meantime I scouted around the country in the hope of finding a team which would follow us to St. John, a distance of eighty miles. One party wanted fifty dollars, but another party by the name of Graham who owned a good team offered to do it for thirty dollars. This offer we willingly accepted and soon re-organized our party and baggage to suit this new arrangement. When part of the truck load had been transferred to the sleigh we continued our journey again, sending the boys ahead with this

lightened load, while Mrs. Landstrom and I, and Mr. Graham, followed with the horses.

When it came time to leave the Morgan home I inquired from our kind host and hostess what our bill should be. They looked at us and smiled and said, "We have never charged anyone yet and we surely are not going to start on you." They gave us some moose meat. Just before leaving they asked us if we had ever tasted elk meat, we answered in the negative so they gave us a large piece, saying, "This might come in handy on the road." We felt very grateful for all the tokens of kindness which we had received, and more so since these people were only strangers to us two days previous.

The first day after leaving the Morgans we covered a distance of fifteen miles. At sunset we came to a trapper's cabin by a little creek where we decided to stay over night. There were eight in our company and with the trapper there were nine of us. Somewhat of a problem faced us. How were all of us going to find shelter for the night in a cabin ten feet long and eight feet wide, having only one window ten inches by twelve inches. But the truth is stranger than fiction and we actually did spend a comfortable night under this small roof.

It was not long until it soon became dark and the darkness was so intense that we could not see our hands in front of us. I asked the trapper, "Is there any way of getting a little light so that we can see to eat our supper?" "I have no coal oil," he said, "but if any of you have a spare button I believe I can get you some." We soon found him a button and we stood silently by to see just what would happen. He first placed the button in the centre of a small piece of rag. He then gathered the rag around the button and tied it in the centre with a small string. The rag containing the button was then placed in the centre of the lid of a common jam tin. Around the button he sprinkled some finely cut moose tallow and placed it on the stove. It did not take long for the heat of the stove to melt this tallow. As it melted it gradually rose in the cloth around the button. When the tallow was melted it was transferred to the table, then this cloth was lighted and it proved to be a very serviceable light.

But where should we sleep? That was the next question. At one end of the small cabin were two bunks, one against each wall with a small aisle between and not more than a foot and a half wide. Originally these bunks were made to accommodate only one person, but that evening they were forced into double service. Instead of serving one sleep, each one served two, and the small aisle between the bunks, which hitherto had never had a sleeper, also had to accommodate one. Then on each side of the stove there were two

sleepers. Ever since sleeping in that cabin that night I have always had a heart full of sympathy for a little sardine.

Next morning we were up and started on our way at daylight. We crossed several creeks, but the ice was strong enough to hold us. There were also a number of very steep hills. Each time the boys would come to one with the truck they would have to stop and wait until we arrived with the sleighs. Whenever we got stuck with the truck we would unhook the horses from the sleigh and hook them to the front end of the truck. Then all the manpower we could spare was used at the rear of the truck, and their motto was "Push," and strange to say, in this way we always got to the top.

On one occasion we found it necessary to cross a large swamp over five miles in length. If the weather had been mild this would have been impossible, but the swamp being frozen, our loads carried over the surface quite nicely.

Our next stopping place was at the home of a rancher by the name of Goodie. This ranch was situated about 25 miles northwest of our trapper's cabin of the previous evening. On his ranch we saw two men, and one lady. When they heard the truck coming down the road they all came outside to greet us. We could excuse their curiosity since our truck was the second automobile or truck that had ever come over this road. The first truck came over that road some years previously.

When we came up to the buildings we were told that we were welcome and that there was plenty of room. "Come on in," they called. The structure of this home was unique. There was no lumber in this house, everything was made from split or hewn logs. The doors were hewn out of logs, and the floor was made from split and hewn logs. This house contained three good sized rooms and each room was very comfortable in appearance. We might add that this home was just inside the British Columbia border, and at that time we had no difficulty in crossing. In fact, we were not sure just where the border was.

In this particular district we found the moose quite plentiful. In the snow, which was about eight inches deep at that time, moose tracks were just like the tracks made by herds of cattle.

After resting for a night in this rancher's home we expressed our thanks and continued our journey. About 4 o'clock that afternoon we came to a settlement on the east side of the Pine river. Here I renewed my friendship with an old acquaintance, Mr. Rudolf Weberg. We drove up to his shack and stopped in front of his door, as soon as I knocked on the door, I opened it and peeked inside. He was quite surprised to see me. As soon as he saw my face he said, "Oh, is that you Landstrom? How in the world could you come in through here." Then I explained to him our wilderness

journey from Fairview. Then he said, "Come right in, I've got lots of moose meat in the cellar." Here our party remained for the night and the whole floor was turned into a bedroom.

At this place in our journey the snow was nearly all gone, so the sleigh which was following the truck could not be used further. At this place I found that Mr. Spence, who had graciously loaned me one of his horses in 1930, was a neighbor to Mr. Weberg. This old friend again came to my assistance. He unloaded what was on the sleigh onto his wagon and Mrs. Landstrom and I went with him in his wagon on our journey. We journeyed about seven miles to Pine river. Here we descended the steep slopes to the water's edge. We soon found a place where the ice was strong enough to carry us across. On the other side of the river it was necessary to hitch the horses to the front of the truck to get up the bank which sloped upwards for about a mile and a half. Mr. Graham, who brought us in his sleigh for part of the journey, rode with the boys to the homestead in the truck.

The next five miles of our journey was quite rough. However, we reached the highway leading to Ft. St. John with no mishaps. Later in the evening we arrived at the homestead about 18 miles north from Fort St. John, following the course of the highway.

In the spring of 1932 I took the train back to Govan. The rest of the family remained at the homestead. That same year, early in December I took the train to Dawson Creek, from where I took the mail truck out to Fort St. John. Here I met a man by the name of Adolph Echert, living about six miles from my son. He was good enough to offer me a ride part way to my homestead. About four miles west of Echert's home I left his sleigh to follow an old, crooked summer trail across the Indian Reserve. It was about six miles up this road to my son's homestead. The time was about 4.30 p.m.

When I left the sleigh it was getting dark, a light snow was falling, and a light north wind blowing. The snow was at least one and one-half feet deep, and there was no sleigh track to mark the road as no one had travelled this road that winter. The only guide I had was to go straight against the wind, as the trail could not be seen since there were bluffs and open spots scattered here and there.

I was carrying a heavy fur coat and quite frequently I stumbled in the darkness over fallen trees. About 8 o'clock I came out to a road but I could not recognize just where I was. I finally came down to the steep banks of Mountaney Creek, but I knew that I should not cross any steep valley. I therefore took the same road back again about a mile and came to a place where there was a large square natural wall resembling a fort. Then I knew where I was — I was back on the same trail that I had travelled when I had been

riding in the sleigh. At this place I was seven and a half miles from the homestead. The reason why I lost my direction was that the wind had turned and I had turned with it.

By this time I had been walking through the snow for five hours and was almost completely exhausted. I was afraid to sit down and rest. My clothes were wringing wet and I was afraid that if I ever sat down and rested I would fall asleep and never wake up again.

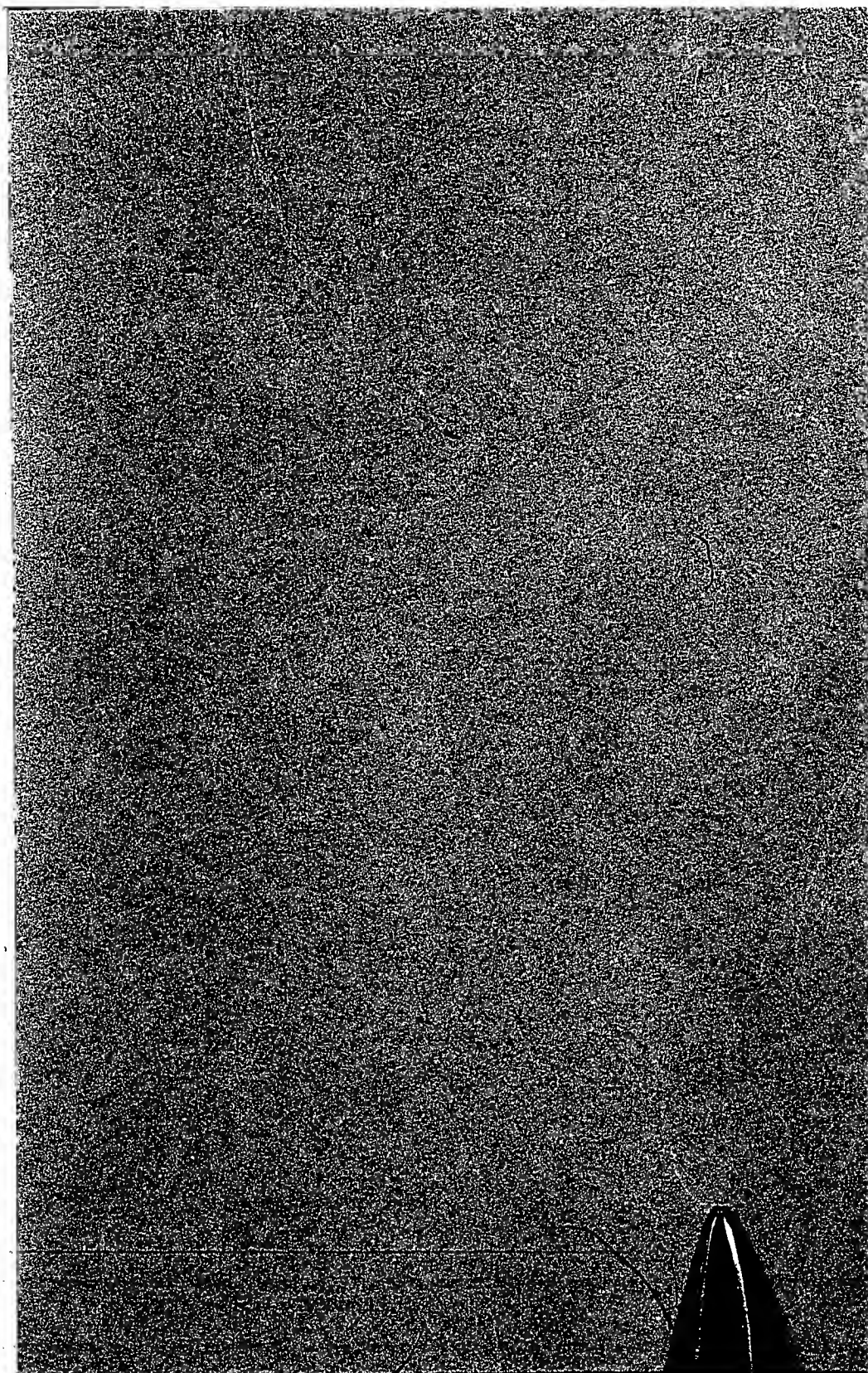
The only thing now that I could do was to go down close to the Indian Creek and follow the valley up for about six miles. I got a stick and this made a very serviceable walking cane. Time and again I was forced to sit down and rest. Finally I managed to get to the corner of my son's homestead. I paused for a moment and was going to give in, thinking that my son would find me there sometime. Just then I put my hand into my coat pocket and found a piece of bread about four inches long. After eating this I felt a little strengthened and I was enabled to make the rest of the journey which was about three-quarters of a mile. I arrived at the homestead about 11.30 that night, after having walked for seven hours. I remained that winter until March and then returned to Govan by train.

It was during the winter of 1930-31 that I organized the first Sunday School in the homestead country. The winter of 1930-31 was a fine open winter and I used this opportunity to begin. On New Year's Day I rode horse back from place to place and invited the people to come to our place to a Sunday School. And they came. Our school was a real success and I am happy to say it still continues until this day.

I am now living on my second homestead at Govan, Saskatchewan, quite contented after the struggle and achievement. And my homestead days, I do expect, are now over. My last birthday, September 6, when I was 70 years old; my wife was 63 last birthday, September 26.

We do not plan to sleep around the camp fire, listening to the wolves and wild animals howling anymore. But the memories of those days I do enjoy, and the many friends gained through these travels shall long linger and be appreciated by me.

—OSCAR LANDSTROM.



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